

WHAT IS OUR ADVICE TO OTHER EDUCATION LEADERS? TOP 4 THINGS YOU CAN DO

1. PUT YOUTH SOCIAL ACTION AT THE HEART OF YOUR SCHOOL OR COLLEGE

Embed it in your vision and mission

Making youth social action an explicit part of your school or college's mission statement, ethos and policy will ensure that it becomes fundamental to operations for both teachers and students.

Write a strategy document that places social action at its core and gives you a way of measuring its impact and effectiveness. Consult with students, staff and parents on what meaningful social action looks, feels and sounds like in your community and use this as the basis for your strategy.

Once you have finalised your strategy, it is important to communicate and reinforce it as clearly as possible. Have a plan, be clear about delivery and promote, promote, promote!

“Social action is not just a one-off event; it is embedded within our academy's culture and ethos. As a school, this is about encouraging all students to participate in social action and to be aware of the values and importance of the charity, political debate or immediate cause.” – Mark Keary, Principal, Bethnal Green Academy, London

Make it the lens through which the curriculum is learned

Setting time aside for prioritised, embedded and interconnected social action within the regular school curriculum will ensure that you don't have to choose between exams or social action. Learning academic subjects through the lens of social action means that new knowledge and skills are given a real-world application and young people can see that they can make a difference to the world around them with what they've learned in school or college.

Ensure that social action is incorporated into the curriculum as early as possible; don't wait for Year 11. This will encourage greater accountability and engagement of students, staff and the wider community, including parents.

“Research within the school has shown that those students who engage in social action tend to achieve at least 1.5 grades higher at GCSE. The requirement of maturity, good time-management, self esteem and confidence that are developed through engagement in social action programmes directly impact upon academic performance.” – Rob Newsome OBE, Headteacher, Ysgol Dyffryn Taf Secondary school

Appoint a senior leader responsible for youth social action

Identify a senior member of staff to coordinate, promote and lead social action across your school or college and the wider community. Having a staff member who takes the lead and has ultimate responsibility will ensure continuity, accountability and that your social action strategy moves forward. It will also make it easier to coordinate strategies with other schools and voluntary organisations.

However, while it's a good idea to appoint one staff member to lead the way, it's important to stress that all staff members need to be actively committed to youth social action, inspiring others and acting as positive role-models.

“The College employs a Community Project Co-ordinator to assist the curriculum managers, link with local organisation and support staff in organising activities and capturing feedback. They also liaise with local press to ensure the good work is publicised, which helps present a positive image of our young people.” – Graham Razey, Principal, East Kent College

